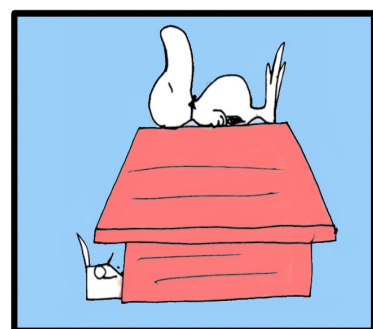
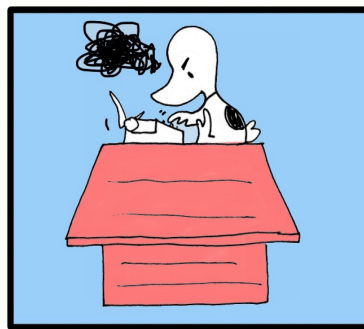
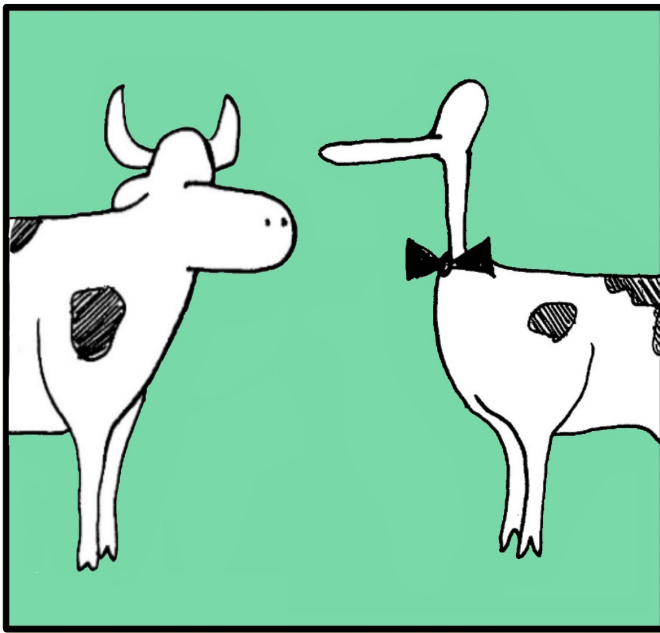


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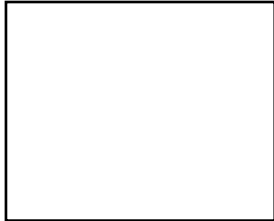


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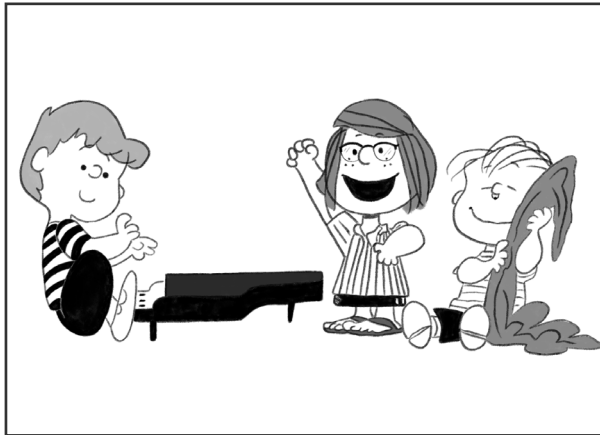
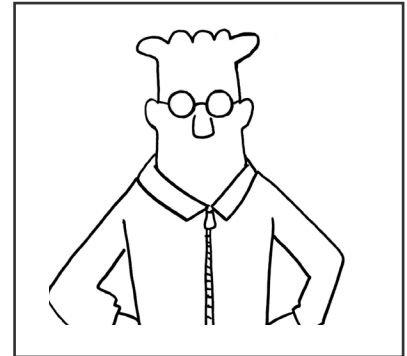
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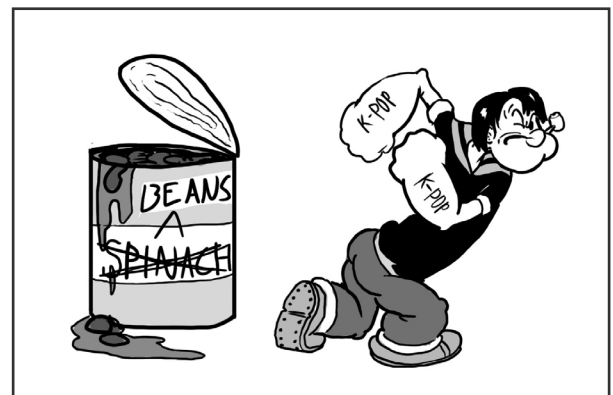
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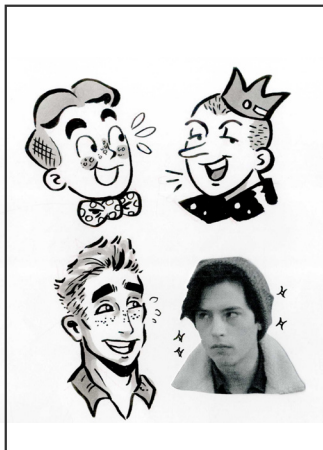
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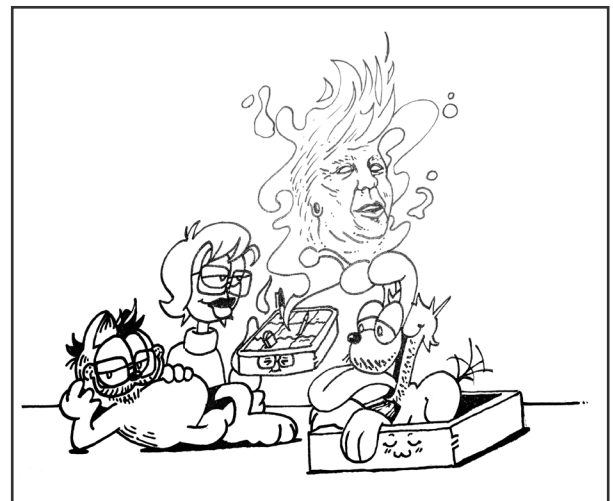
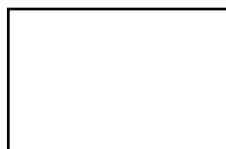
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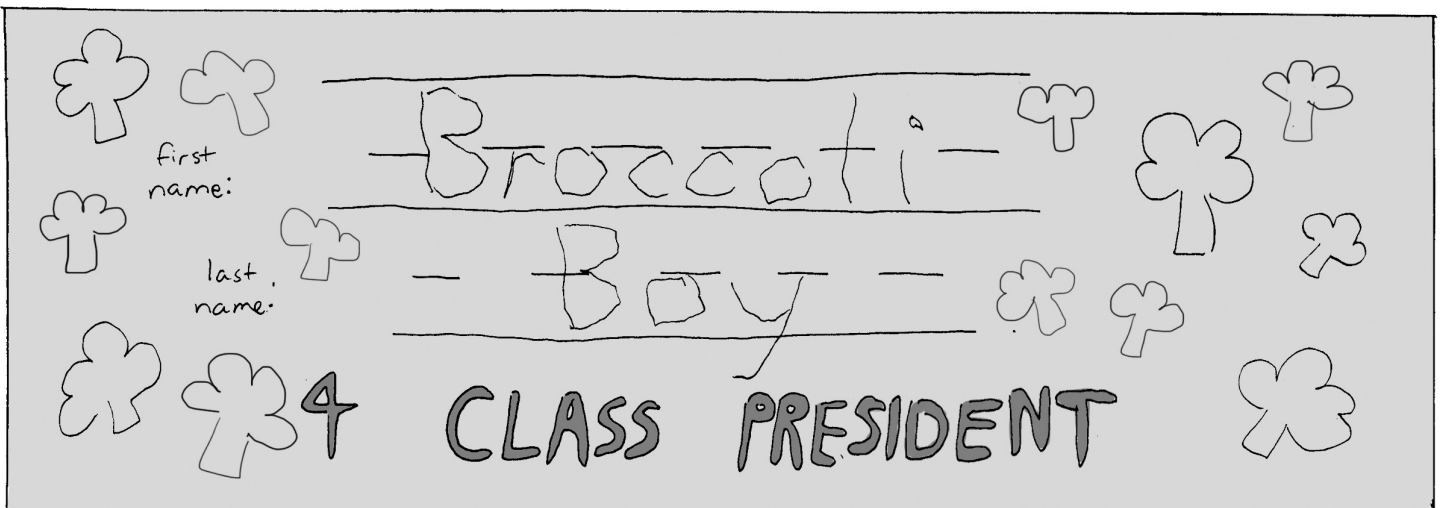
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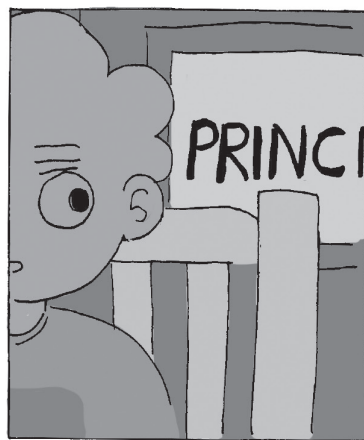
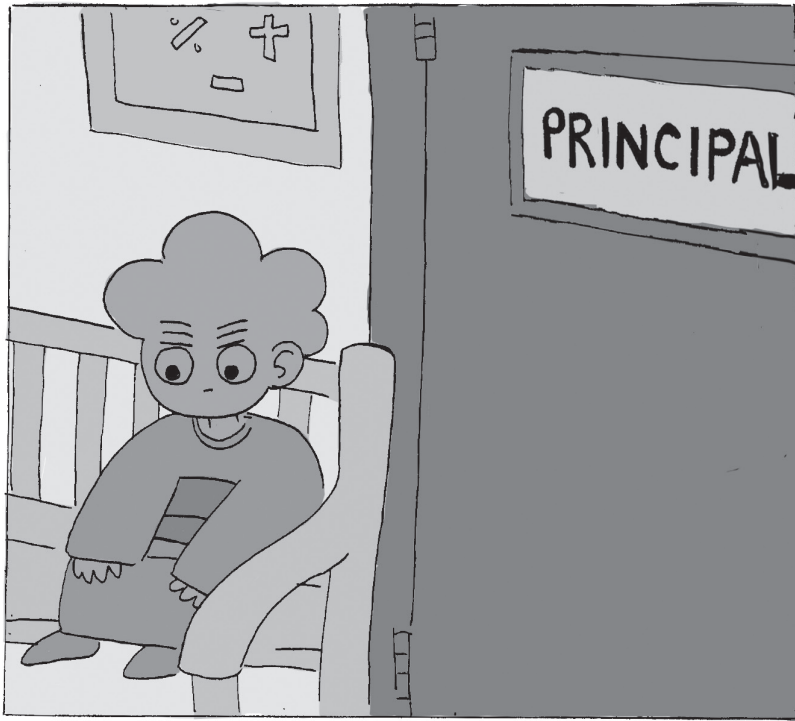


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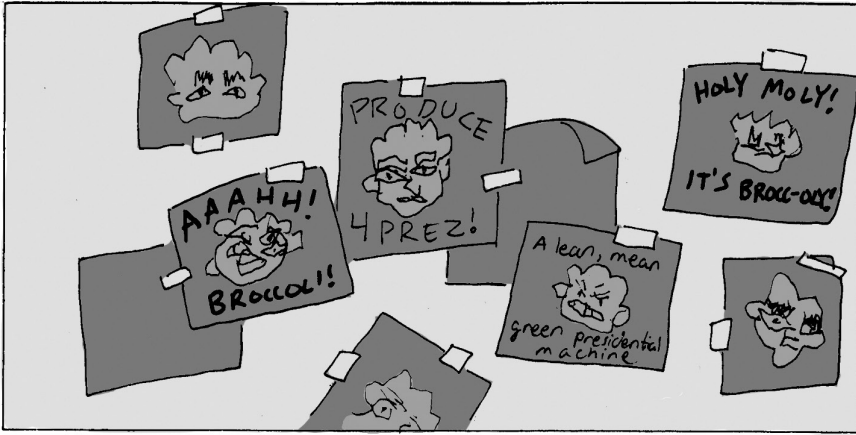
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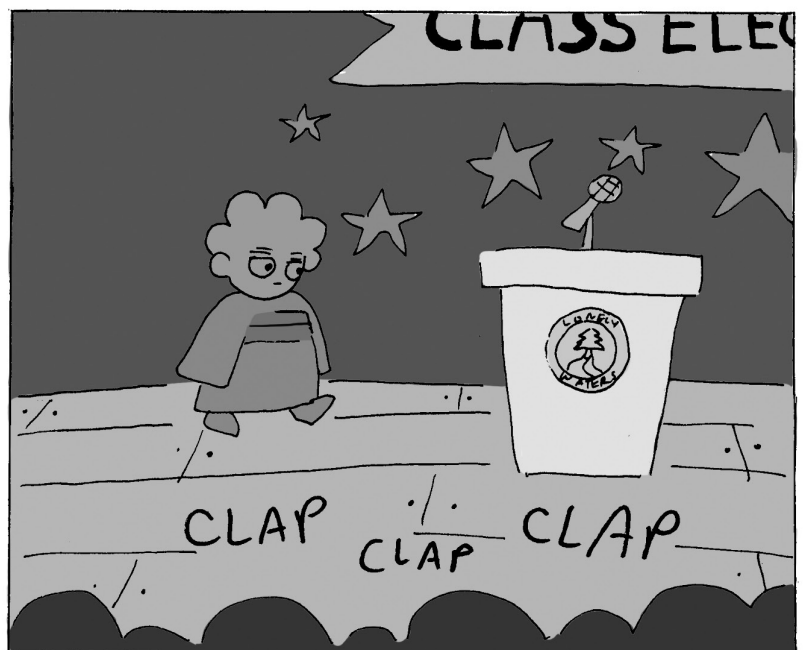
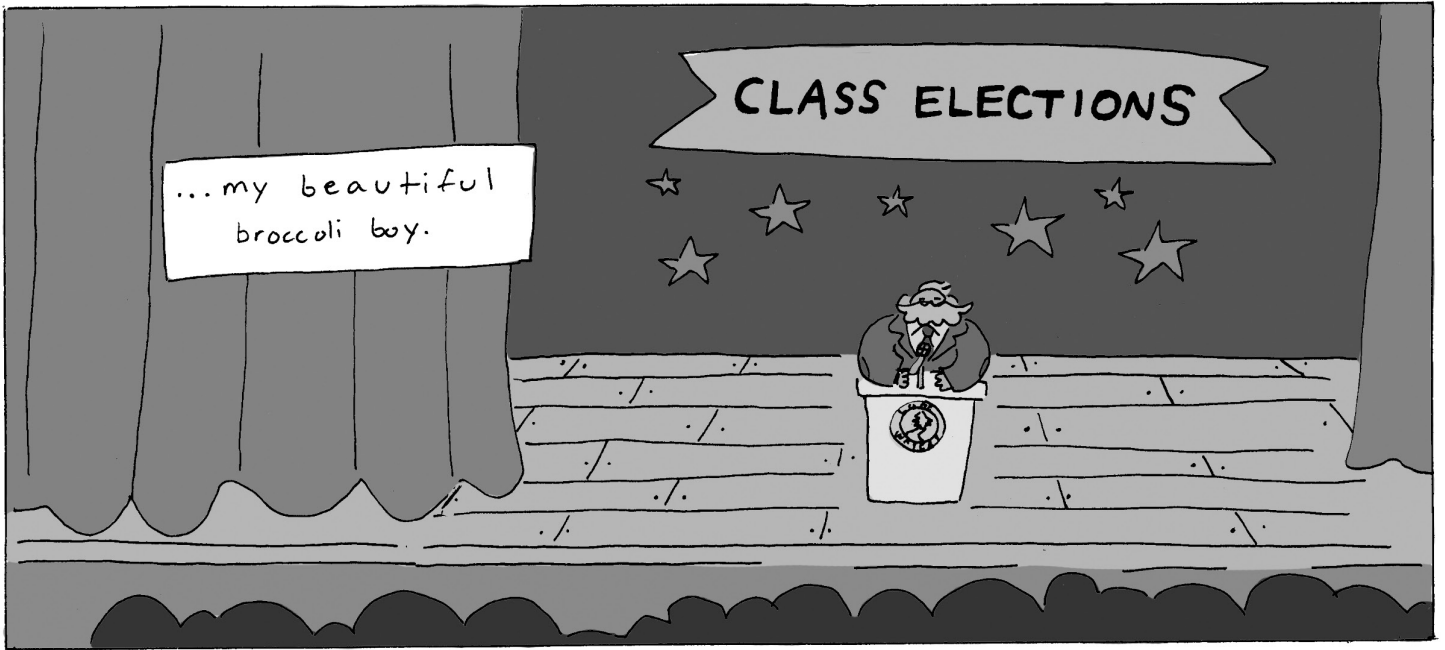


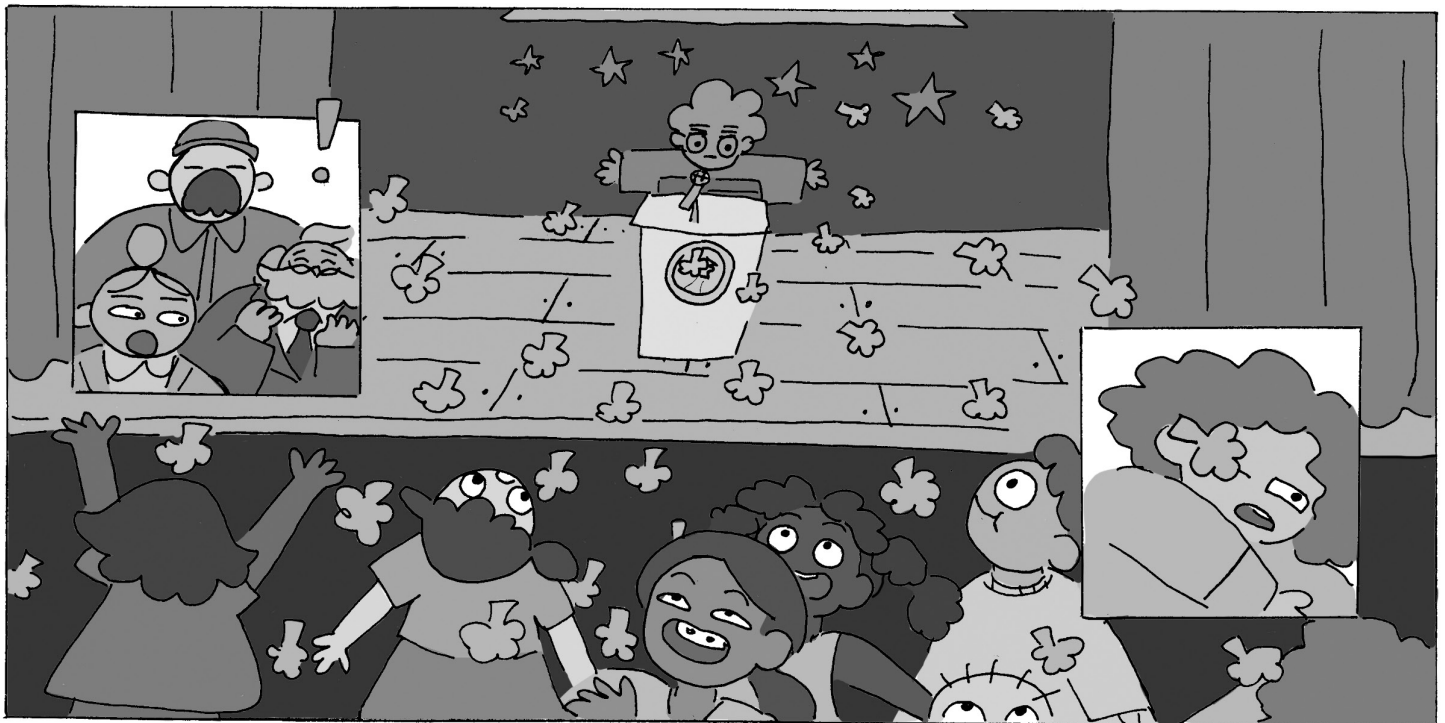


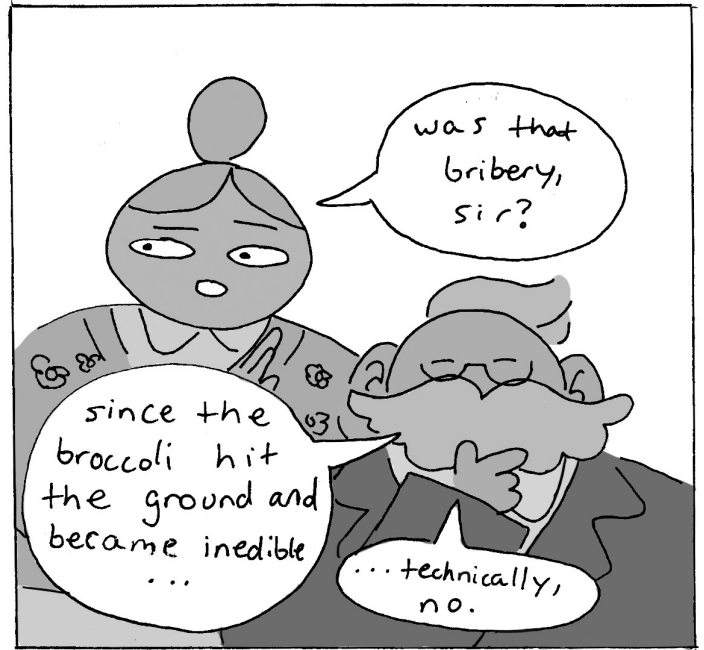












The Funnies in Film and TV

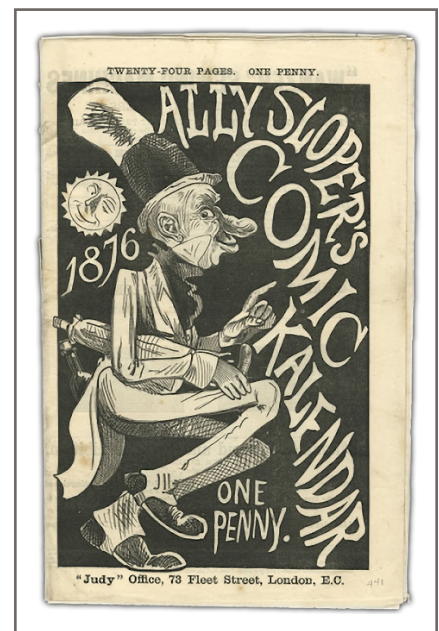
Alex Milshtein

When you think of comic strip characters in movies, what do you think of? Most of you will conjure a mental image of Snoopy or a large orange Monday hating cat. While superheroes are the predominate comic characters appearing in film and movies today, comic strip characters have a rich history in both mediums. Stretching back to 1898, comic strip characters were the first inspiration for early films and shorts; some live action and others animated. Producers utilized the popularity of strips like *Joe Palooka* to entice audiences to watch B-films starring the characters of said comic strips. Comic Strips like *Popeye*, *Little Orphan Annie*, and *The Addams Family* would go on to have such successful media projects, that their comic strip origins are often forgotten. During the latter half of the 20th century, comic strip characters would appear less and less in movies but would find a new home in television specials. By the 21st century, there were very few comic strip film or television projects, with *The Boondocks* being the outlier in nostalgia projects like the *Peanuts Movie* or *The Garfield Show*. Today the comic strip industry is dying, being replaced by webcomics. Web Comics are unlikely to grace the silver screen or

be broadcast on TV, but webcomic characters still appear in animation on the internet, continuing the tradition of bringing comic strip characters to life in animation.

Ally Sloper was one of the first comic strip characters to appear in film. *Ally Sloper* is a gag cartoon that appeared in British funny papers between 1867 and 1916. The character appeared in two live action shorts released in 1898 and two more being released in 1900, airing in British music halls and cinema.¹ The titular character was easily recognizable by his iconic red runny nose. It's impossible to know how his cartooned antics transitioned into film since none of the Sloper films survived. There's no indication that *Ally Sloper* began a trend of comic strip movies. What's important about the *Ally Sloper* movies is that when films looked for their first inspiration they found their muse on the funny pages.

Across the pond, the American film industry was cutting its teeth, and like their British counterparts, also looked to the funny pages. *The Katzenjammer Kids*, the longest running comic strip in history, ran from 1897-2006 and is still distributed to this day.² *The Katzenjammer Kids* made their film



debut the same year as *Ally Sloper*, appearing in a live action short in 1898.³ Unlike *Ally Sloper*, *The Katzenjammer Kids* would go on to enjoy additional film appearances appearing in various live action, and later animated shorts during the early 20th century.

Around the 1930's characters from the comic strip *Popeye* and the gag comic *Little Orphan Annie*

¹ "Ally Sloper: The First Comics Superstar?" *Image and Narrative*.

began appearing in films. *Popeye* appeared in a variety of animated theatrical shorts throughout the 1930's, while *Annie* appeared in two live action feature film during the decade. While *The Katzenjammer Kids* outlasted many comic strips, *Popeye* and *Little Orphan Annie* go onto to feature in film (and later television projects) throughout the 20th and 21st century and distance themselves from their comic strip origins.

In the late 1930's and early 40's the movie industry had changed and so did the way comic strip characters appeared in those films. Comic strip characters no longer appeared in animated shorts but would lend their characters and their stories to live action serial films.

Joe Palooka a comic strip about a heavyweight boxer in the 1920's by the same name, made its comic strip debut in 1930. The strip was immensely popular and appeared in a live action stand-alone film in 1934. 12 years later *Joe Palooka* would debut the first film, *Joe Palooka The Champ*, in the *Palooka* serial films. *Palooka* was one of several action/sports based comic strips to be turned into a serial series, another notable action comic to be turned into a series of live-action films was *Jungle Jim*.

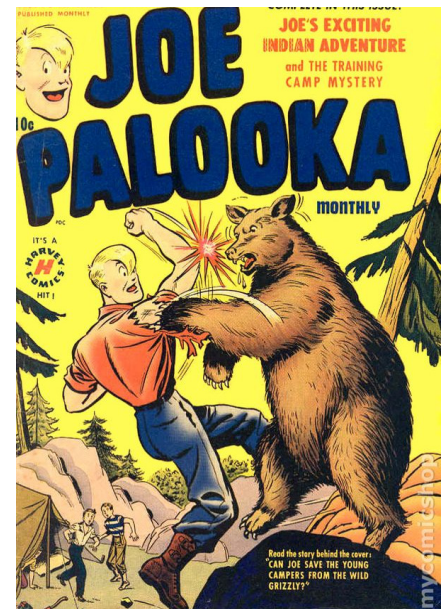
I'd like to take a brief pause from the history of comic strip characters in film, to do some analysis of the *Palooka* serial films. It is difficult to do an analysis on this subject due to a lack of proper primary sources, and very few secondary sources. Combined with a crunching deadline to complete this article, resulted in me not feeling comfortable enough to give an opinion on why the history of comic strips appearing in film and television is the way it is. That being said, I was able to find the majority of the movie posters for the *Palooka* serial films; which I feel, as you will see, say something about the multi-media appeal, or lack thereof, of comic strips in film. You might be thinking, "Wouldn't a good writer have introduced this

concept sooner, and then seamlessly transitioned into the point your about to make?" That's an excellent point, however, I actually don't have consistent access to previous movie posters to make the same observations that I'm about to make. You also might be thinking, "Maybe you should stop being Meta and just write your point?" To which I respond, that's fair.

The movie poster for *Joe Palooka the Champ* features the actors playing the comic characters, however, all of these actors are off in the corners. The main focus is a large comic version of *Joe Palooka*, smack dab in the middle of the poster. This suggests that the producers wanted to capitalize on the iconic image of *Palooka's* face to attract moviegoers. However, this strategy may not have been successful or the producers wanted to move the *Palooka* series away from its comic book origins because five months later, the movie poster for the second film in the serial, *Gentleman Joe Palooka*, featured a much heavier focus on the actors, while a cartoon version of the boxer was relegated to a smaller role, although the cartoon face is near the title. As the serials continued the role of *Joe Palooka's* cartoon face became smaller and smaller, until in 1949's *Joe Palooka: the Counter Punch* poster didn't include the cartoon *Palooka*, nor did he appear on posters after.⁴

Joe Palooka's cartoon roots disappearing from the movie posters isn't an isolated incident. The popular comic strip *Blondie* also had a set of serial films. Unlike *Joe Palooka* and *Jungle Jim*, *Blondie* wasn't an action comic, but rather a humorous strip that focused on the main character, Dagwood's, tumultuous relationship with his boss and his love of large sandwiches. The poster for the first movie, *Blondie*, only had the comic strip portrayal of the *Blondie* character. All of the other movies in the series feature the actors either drawn in a realistic style or photographed.⁵

As the 1950's waned, Hollywood began to feature fewer and fewer projects that utilized comic strip intellectual property. Howev-



er, the characters that graced the best part of a newspaper found a new multimedia home in the land of TV. In 1964 *The Addams Family* made their debut in a live action series. The series was based on a gag comic of the same name that appeared in the *New Yorker*. According to the obituary for the Executive Producer, David Levy, David was walking around New York's 5th Avenue and passed a display of *The Addams Family* books. He thought it'd be a hit series and went on to develop the characters, giving them names, which hadn't been established previously in the gag comic.⁶ Like *Popeye* and *Little*

2 Suddath, Claire. "Top 10 Long-Running Comic Strips." *Time*, Time Inc., 17 May 2010.

3 "The Katzenjammer Kids in School (1898)." *IMDb*, IMDb.com.

4 You can view all the movie posters at https://www.imdb.com/find/?q=%E2%80%A2%09Joe%20Palooka&s=tt&ref_=fn_al_tt_mr

5 You can find these movie posters at https://www.imdb.com/list/ls052077415/?ref_=tt_rls_3

6 January. "David Levy; Producer Created 'Addams Family'." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 31 Jan. 2000.

Orphan Annie, *The Addams Family* moved away from its comic origins and became recognized as a TV show and movie series in pop culture.

A franchise that will never not be associated with its comic strip, *Peanuts*, made its television debut in 1965 with the classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. It's difficult to understate how successful this animated special is. Not only were there one to two *Peanuts* TV specials almost every year from 1965 to 1992⁷ but when other comic strip characters appeared on TV, they did so in the form of a TV special.

During the 1970's and 80's strips such as *Garfield*, *For Better or For Worse*, and *Wizard of ID* all had multiple TV specials. The first *Garfield* special, *Here comes Garfield*, would go on to win an Emmy for Outstanding Animated Feature. This Emmy win illustrates an important difference between the early comic strip films and the era of comic strip TV specials, TV specials were animated, while the serials and shorts previously discussed were predominantly live-action. During this time period, there were a few attempts at creating a TV show featuring comic book strip characters like *Garfield and Friends* or *Heathcliff and the Catillac Cats*, but all were short lived.

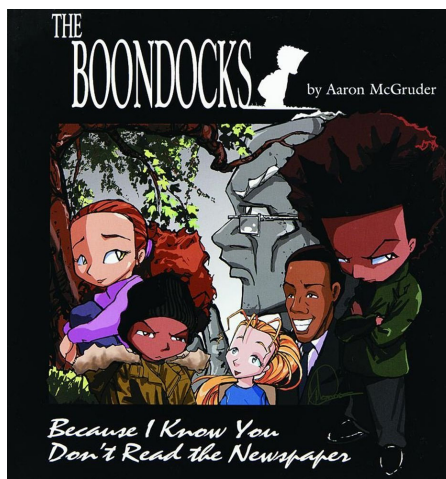
While *Peanuts* TV specials were still made and enjoyed during the 1990's, they were the exception, not the rule. Although, 1994 saw the first *Far Side* TV special, which got some fairly good reviews.⁸ I only mention the special because I highly recommend checking it out. For the most part, the story of comic strips in TV and film in the 1990's is one of decline. There was a new *The Addams Family* movie in 1991, but that was based on the popularity and nostalgia for the 1960's live action TV series. By the 2000's there were very few movies or tv shows based on comic strips.

The new millennia started with an animated series based on *Baby Blues*. The strip focused on a family of five, with two elementary school children, a baby, and the mom and dad. The animated series focused on the mom and dad while they were pregnant with their first born.⁹ It was not critically acclaimed, to say the least, and was canceled after its first season. There were three other notable film and tv projects in the 2000's *The Garfield Movie*, *Over the Hedge*, and *The Boondocks*.

The Garfield Movie is indicative of producers wanting to capitalize on the nostalgia and past success of the Garfield franchise with a live-action adaptation. I actually saw this movie as a kid, and I remember being fairly underwhelmed (I was easy to please too and loved everything comics). The box office and critical reviews reflected this. *Over the Hedge* was an attempt at creating a new franchise based on a comic strip character that hadn't had a previous tv or film presence. I also saw this movie, it's actually pretty good, but nothing to write home about. Producers probably felt similarly as this movie didn't get the sequel treatment like other, more successful 3D animated films. Finally, *The Boondocks* is probably one of the greatest pieces of art from the 2000's and 2010's and I highly recommend checking it out. Created by Andrew McGruder both the strip and the show take a critical and hilarious look at race relations and black culture. The tv show is a very unique one, but that's because it's based on a very unique comic strip.

By the 2010's there were no movies or tv shows based on comic strips that hadn't already had tv shows or movies made prior. Both of the projects that were made in the 2010's are based on *Garfield* or *Peanuts*. With the overall decline of the comic strip business, it's hard to imagine a tv show or movie utilizing a comic strip Intellectual Property that was made after the 1990's. However, the form

of comic strips has found new life in webcomics. *Cyanide and Happiness* is a prime example of a web cartoon using the structure of comic strips. Could webcomics like *Cyanide and Happiness* hit box offices or find a home on cable? Probably not, but it remains to be seen, and could happen. In the meantime, *Cyanide and Happiness* release animated shorts on its website and has partnered with a comedy website to produce a long form animated show, similar to a television program, but on the internet.



The story of comic strips in film is one of being at the groundbreaking, but over time becoming irrelevant. Comic strip characters would find a new home in TV specials, but aside from *Peanuts*, those faded too. Now that the comic strip business is dying, will webcomics inspire new projects, or will they be regulated to live their animated (or live-action) lives on the internet?

⁷ *Peanuts* TV specials didn't stop after 1992 they just didn't air on at least once a year. The last *Peanuts* special, *Happiness is a Warm Blanket* aired in 2011.

⁸ Bierbaum, Tom. "Tales from the Far Side." *Variety*, Variety, 24 Oct. 1994, variety.com/1994/film/reviews/tales-from-the-far-side-2-1200438842/.

⁹ "WB's 'Baby Blues' Exceeds Critic's (Low) Expectations." *Southcoasttoday.com*, Southcoasttoday.com, 12 Jan. 2011, www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20000728/NEWS/307289910.

FRESHMAN FRENZY

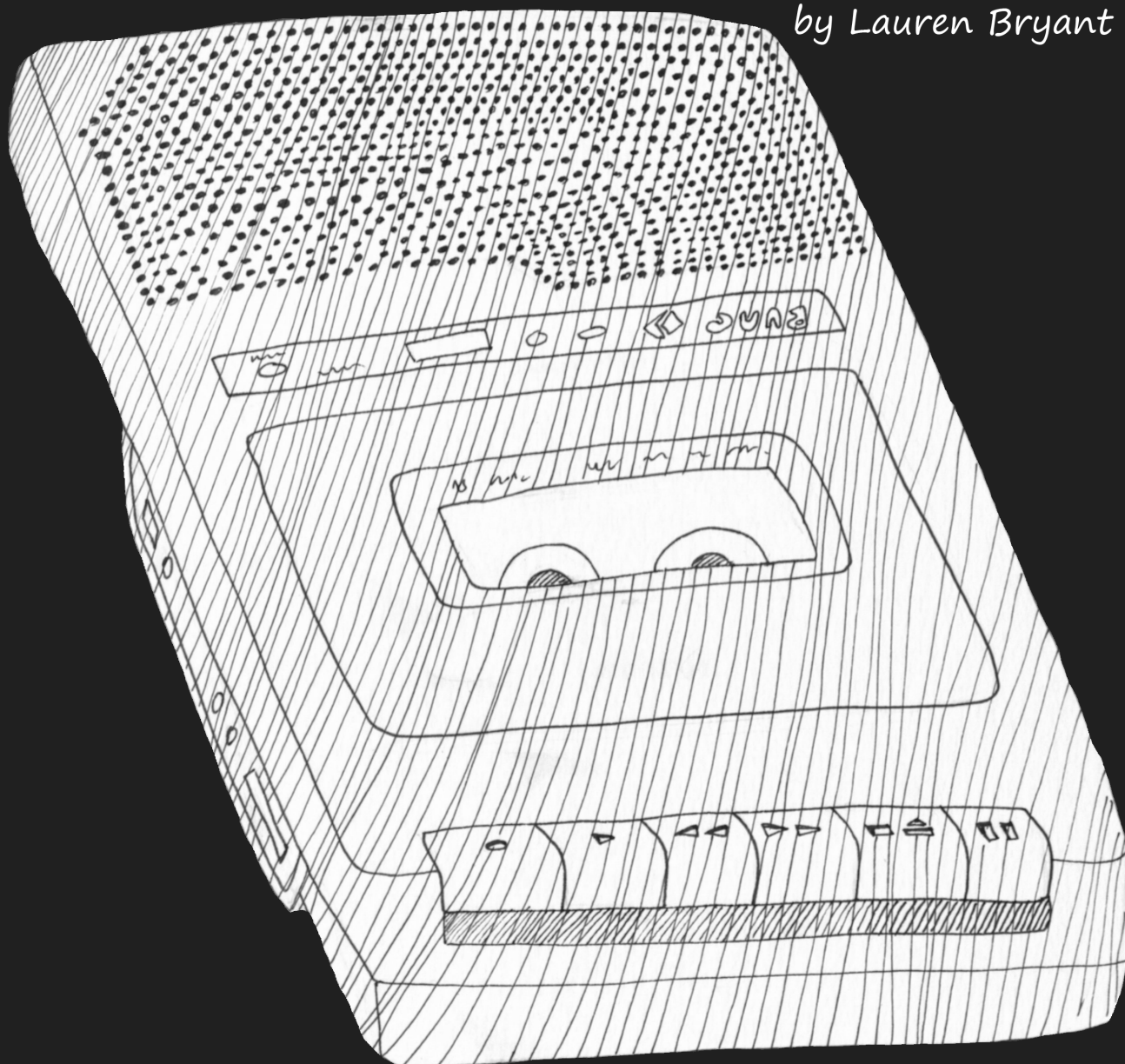
Ellie Reis
IG: @reis.el

CLASS STARTS IN 15 MINUTES-FIND YOUR SUPPLIES!



THE PRISON

by Lauren Bryant

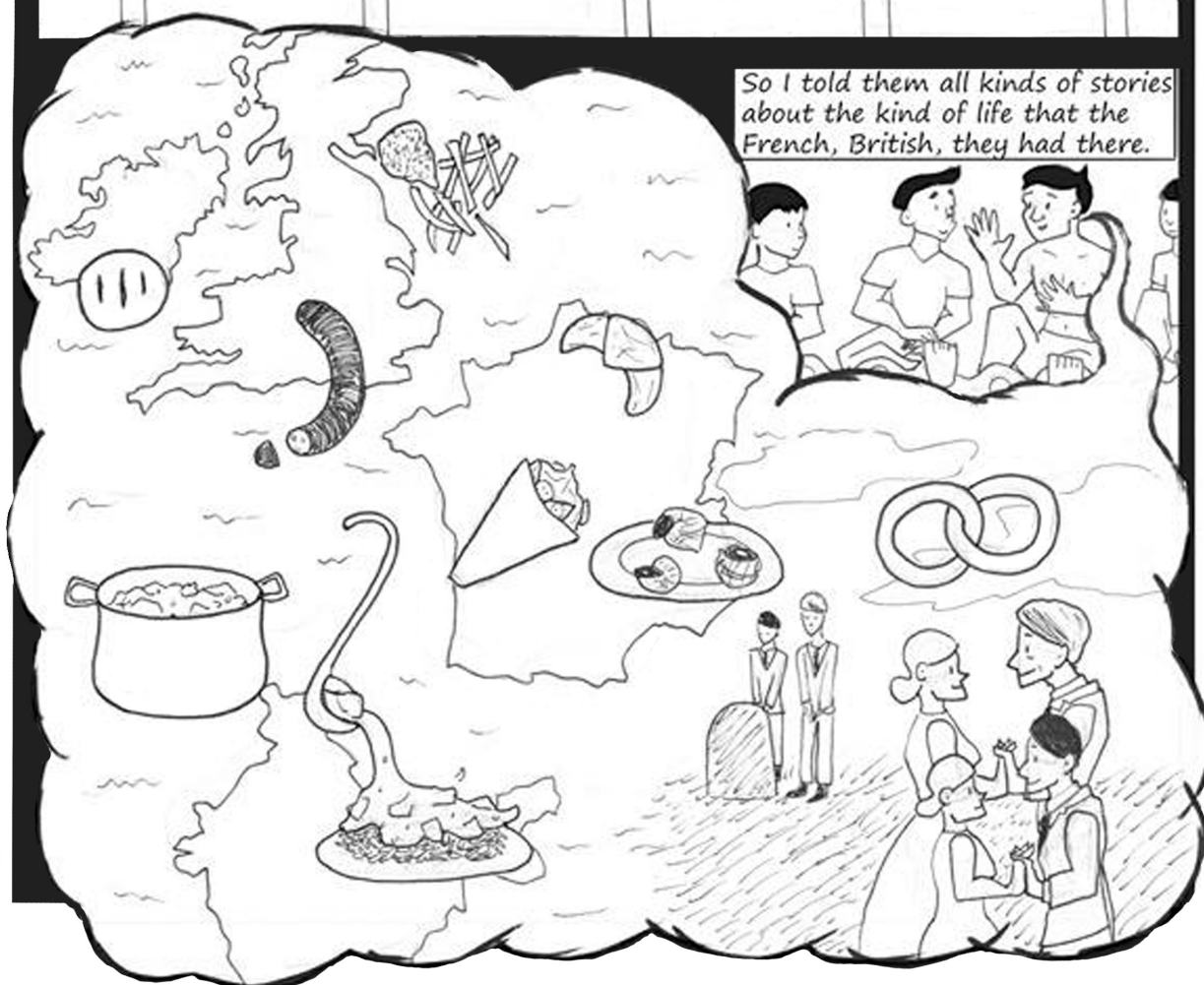


At the end of the Vietnam war in 1975, Phong Xuan Nguyen was sent to a reeducation camp. This is a small snapshot of his time there, based on an interview conducted by the Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archive. The rest of his story can be found on their website.

Interview with Phong Xuan Nguyen. Vietnam Center and Archive. OH0250 25 September 2002 Stacks . Phong Xuan Nguyen Collection. The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University.



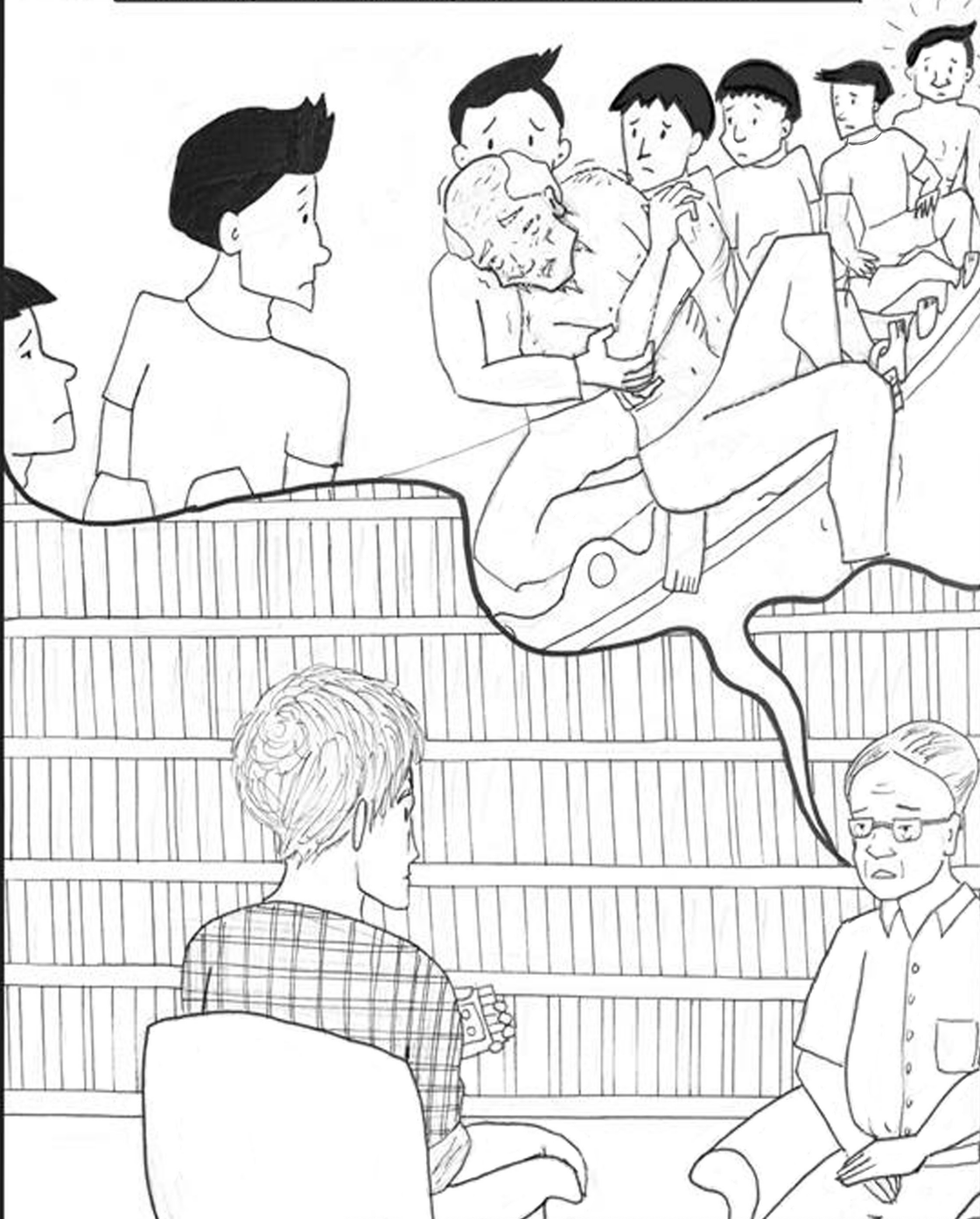
It turned out that in the evenings they liked very much that I tell them stories, mainly how people behave in the west and things like that, since I was in France and England.



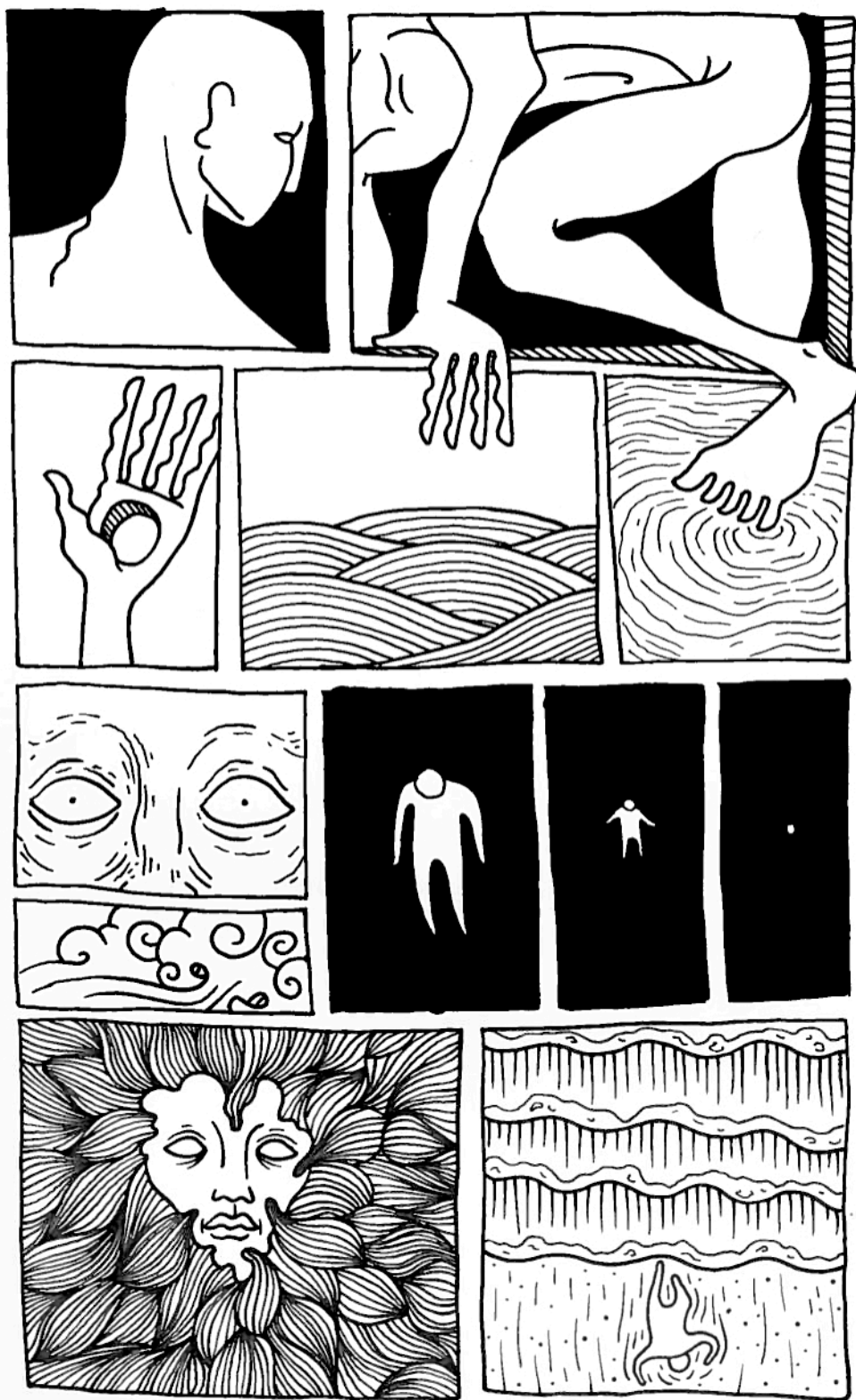
So I told them all kinds of stories about the kind of life that the French, British, they had there.



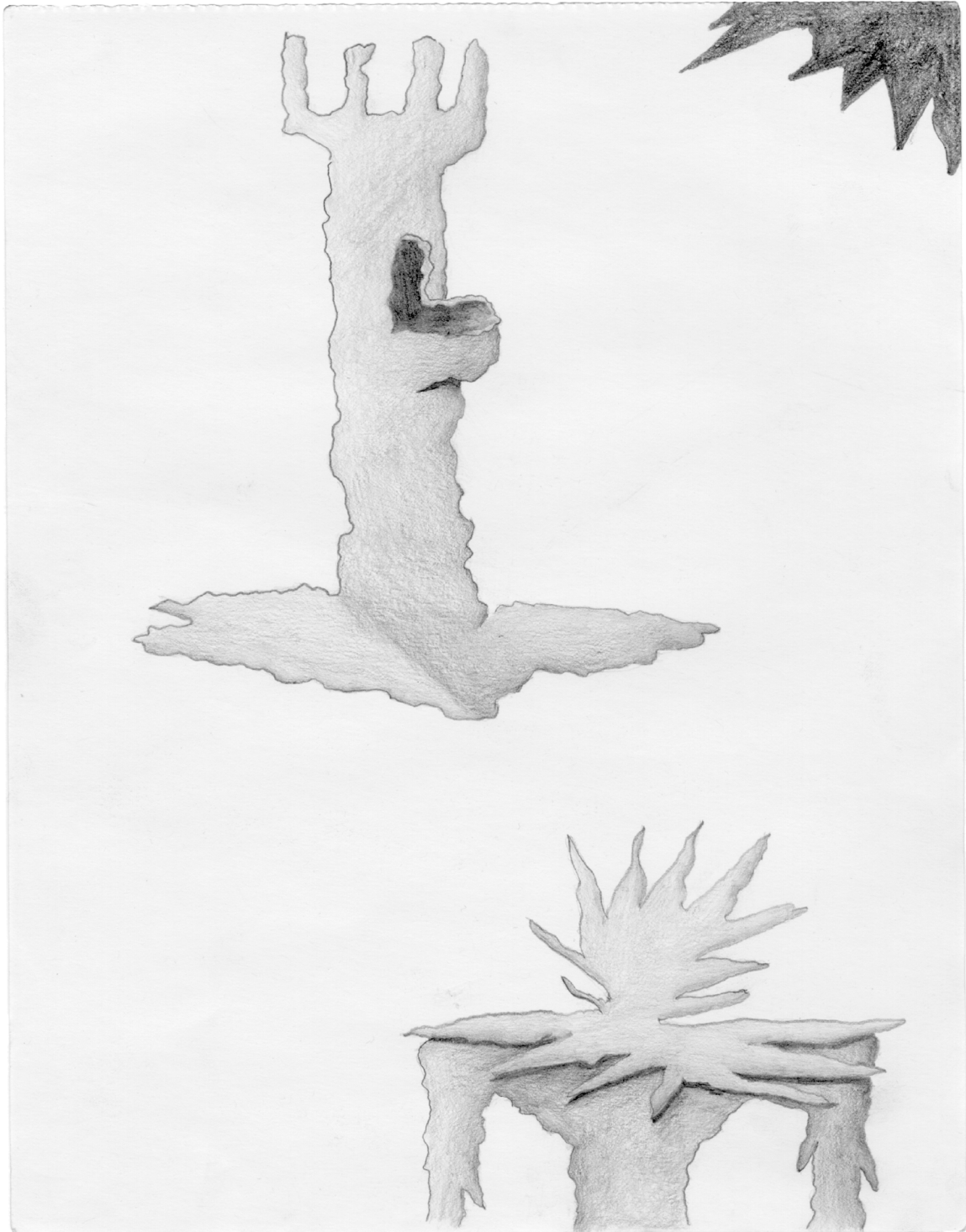
But of course it was also a very sad state of affairs because many of the older ones died quite quickly when we moved to the north because they did not have any experience with the cold...



SOMEWHERE



by reid austin

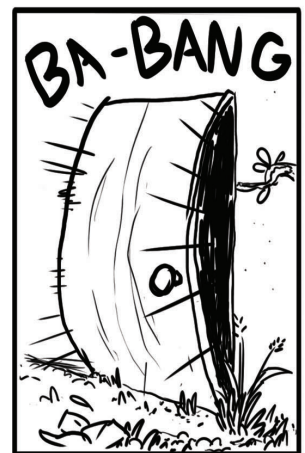
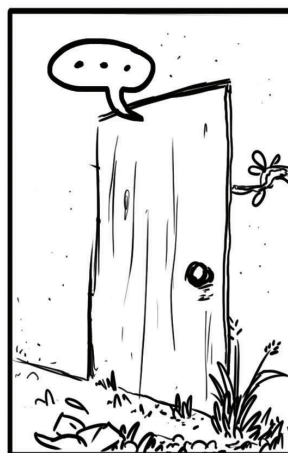
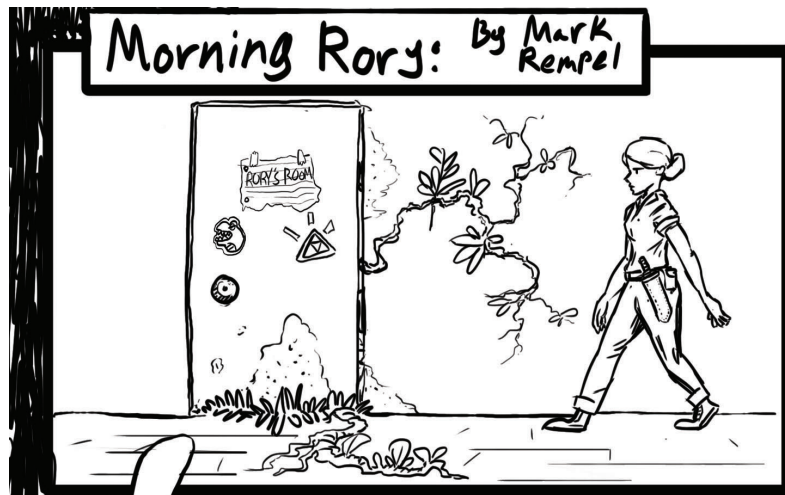


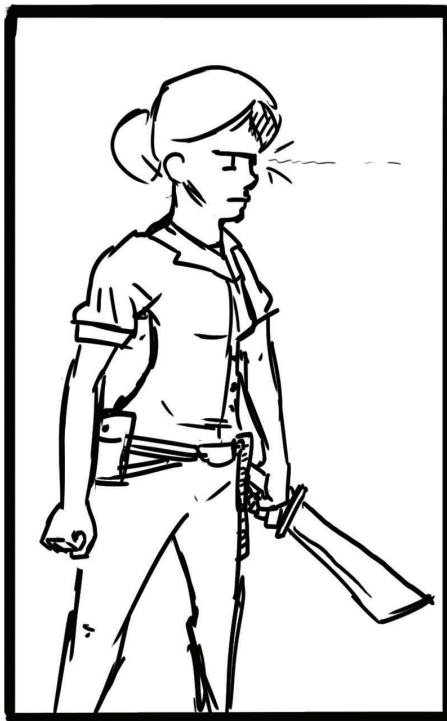






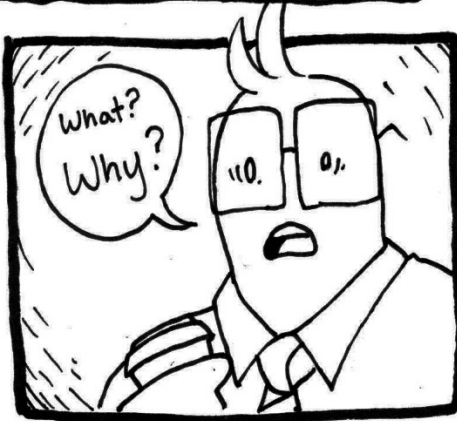
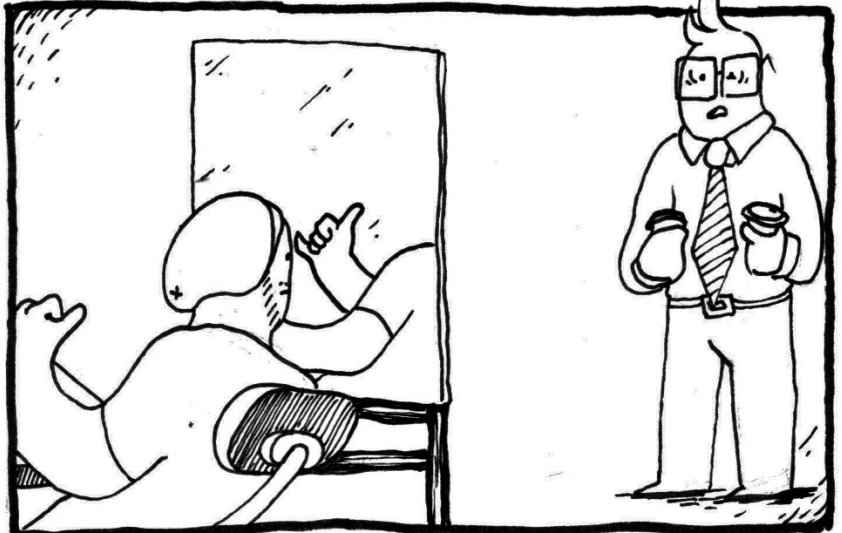
Morning Rory: By Mark Rempel

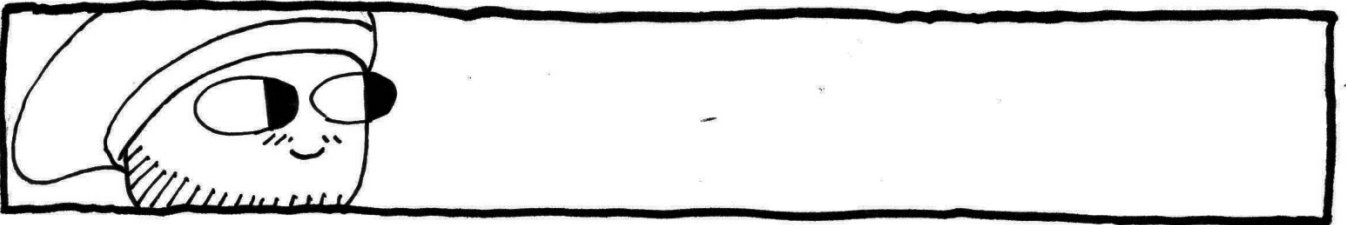
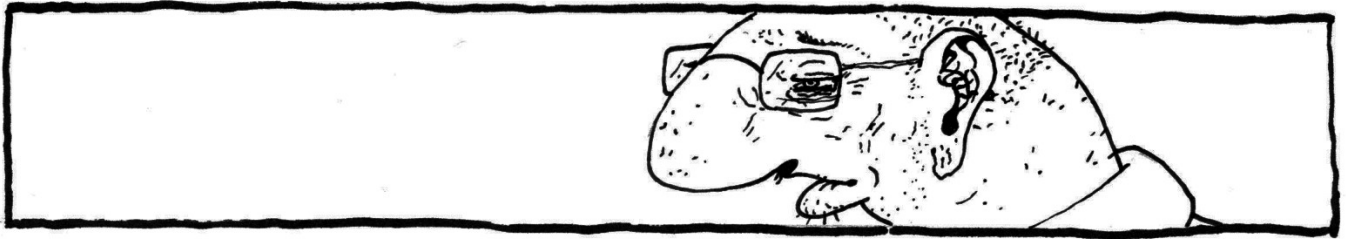
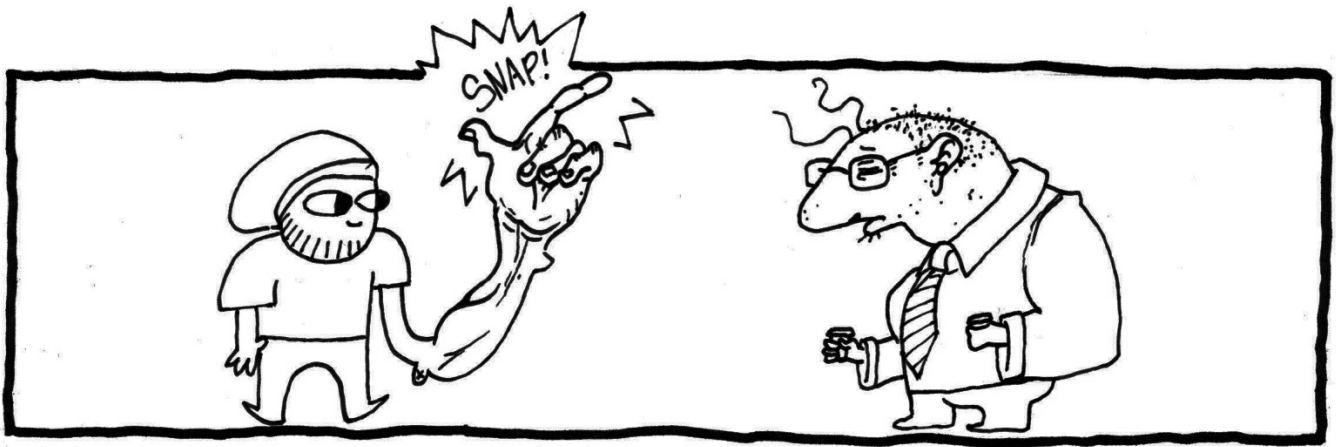












The Winding Road to Syndication:

An Interview with John Kovalleski

Conducted by Lauren Bryant

John Kovalleski is a cartoonist who has created two syndicated comic strips, Bo Nanas (previously) and Daddy Daze (currently). He has also done cartooning for a number of other clients, including various magazines (such as MAD Magazine), greeting card companies, and more. You can read Daddy Daze at daddydazecomix.com or comicskingdom.com/daddy-daze and Bo Nanas at gocomics.com/bonanas. For more information, check out kovaleski.com.

Art Ducko: What made you want to get into drawing cartoons and comics?

John Kovalleski: When I was a kid, I was a child of television and watched a lot of cartoons. When I started to read, anything with cartoons was something I enjoyed. I ended up reading the comics in the paper, and that's what started me wanting to draw comics. Although when you get right down to it, it was probably happening when I was seeing cartoons on TV, although animation was some sort of magical thing where I didn't quite understand how it worked. I think when I was seeing comics in the newspaper, then I was like "oh, okay, I can draw these," and that's what started

me wanting to do that.

AD: What comics and cartoons influenced you? Are there any that are really crucial to your development as a cartoonist?

JK: I was a child of television, and this was pre-cable, so I would watch anything on TV to be honest. But it was definitely *Looney Tunes*, which is still sort of the pinnacle of [cartoons], and the interesting thing is that I now have an eight year old son and we watch *Looney Toons* and he thinks it's hysterical, so it's great that it still translates. In terms of comic strips, I was reading everything, but *Peanuts* was the best thing around. It was just so smart

and well written and was character based, which was a distinct difference from most of the strips that had started at the end of the 1800s, where it was more character types, like "here's the loud character, here's the shy character," and so on. He reinvented comic strips, and I don't think I realized that at the time, but that was the one I was drawn to the most. When I got a little bit older, I was reading *MAD* magazine. *MAD* at that time was the pinnacle of satire; there wasn't really anything else. That also opened up my eyes to a bunch of things that I as a kid was not privy to. I wasn't going to go see *The Godfather*, so reading a parody of that was as close to it as I got. I knew nothing about

Woodstock, I knew nothing about Judaism—I was just a regular old Catholic white kid from what would be considered the suburbs. But you just weren't experiencing these things—as they say now, the world gets smaller, because we know what's going on, but besides nightly news, which I wasn't watching, so much of what was happening in the outside world I didn't know and/or I wasn't experiencing. *MAD* was kind of a window to that. *MAD* also taught you not to trust everything you see, not to trust advertising. That was also an eye-opener, that not everything that's being told to you is the truth. So I can say those were my big three influences.

AD: You've done a lot of different cartooning work according to your website, and that does include *MAD* magazine. I saw greeting cards and newspaper strips as well. What has been the most fun and what has been the most difficult out of all those kinds of cartooning work?

JK: I always wanted to be a cartoonist since I was a little kid, and I always wanted to have a comic strip. But the problem was as I was getting into highschool, I was good at art, but I didn't really have any ideas for a comic strip, and I wasn't really working on anything towards that. When I was a young adult I met other cartoonists who were trying to get syndicated who would just come up with ideas. If it got syndicated, that was great, and if it didn't, whatever. I didn't start working on comic strips until I was in my late

twenties, which was a bit late. I think it mostly started when I was working for an alternative paper—I started doing illustration for them. Then I went to school for graphic design because I thought "I can't make a living cartooning." When I was a graphic designer, I ended up doing cartoon illustration if somebody needed that, and I submitted more and more ideas to syndicates—which wasn't much to be honest. I needed something that would really speak to me. What ended up happening was I thought "Okay, I'm not gonna get syndicated, I'm tired of being graphic designer. Let's



focus on [cartooning] and see if I can get enough freelance going that I could quit my job." It took me about a year and a half. I was teaching adjunct at a local college, I was doing caricatures, and those were the things that kept me afloat, as well as doing regular cartooning. Then I was thinking "I had this dream of having a comic strip, but that's not gonna happen." [It's] like when you're a kid and you dream of being an astronaut, cowboy, princess, or something. Just because you thought of something when you were six doesn't make it viable. Then I [came] up with this idea, just waking up with it one morning, of a talking monkey in the real world. The Washington Post

Writers Group was doing this fellowship called the FineToon fellowship, which was a development deal with bells and whistles on it to bring up the next generation of cartoonists. If you got chosen for one of these you got an amount of money, and there were usually a number of people who would get it at the same time, and they would have you come to Washington with the editors and with merchandising people. At the end of that time period they would decide whether they'd syndicate you or not, and they decided they would. *Bo Nanas* got launched in 2003 and never did very

well. It went for a little over four years. My freelance had started to falter at that point because of so much time spent on it. It was a quirky strip when quirky comic strips just weren't...you know, a quirky, talking animal that wasn't somebody's pet would have had a better chance during the days when *Bloom County* was running. So that kind of pooped out. Towards the end I started pitching a lot to *MAD* magazine. They were opening up and looking for new talents and making new sections, so I was pitching a lot to Strip Club, which was comic strip based. I think it was 2006 that I got into there, which was a big thrill. During that time I was doing a lot of greeting cards, stuff for

kid publications, and art for puzzles and games. And then most recently I got syndicated again with a comic strip, *Daddy Daze*, which is loosely based on my life as a single dad and coparenting my son, although in the comic strip he's an infant; he's eight now. That actually came from a comic strip I did called *Daddling Badly* that I did just for myself. I ran it online as I went back to school for my MFA. At that time I was just doing it once a week, and it was done very loosely and was just completely true stories of myself and my then wife having our first kid and all the funny things that hap-

as much. What I'm writing now is more character based. I can tell when I'm writing stuff if it doesn't quite seem like it's what the dad would say to his son, or the son would say to his dad. One of the premises is that the son, named Angus, is an infant, and talks just with the word "ba," but his family all understand him. My son, when he was six months old, got into saying the word "ba" over and over again, and he was saying it very emphatically, like "I am talking." I decided to use that in the way movies and TV have for years; it's a thing in *Star Wars* where Chewbacca and R2D2 talk in ways that

tablet were you're drawing right on the "monitor," and he asked me "Wouldn't that make it faster?" I said it's true, but I like to work in real space. I get twitchy if I'm on the computer too long. I would rather draw on paper and scan it. What I'm doing now I'm really enjoying!

AD: What's it like having to create new content every day?

JK: It's a little daunting. When I did it the first time I had a long development period, so I had a lot of strips ahead of time. It's the same thing now where I had GoComics and I was in development for about a year. It can be daunting but



pened. Even the punchlines are not made up. Then I took that, fictionalized it, and started shopping it around to syndicates, and no one wanted to go with it. It ran for about a year on Gocomics.com, and then one of the syndicates decided to pick it up. Let me answer the question you were asking, which was what is my favorite kind of cartooning to do. My favorite is something where I'm writing about characters. I was not thrilled with just being an illustrator. I liked when I was writing and coming up with ideas. With greeting cards it was okay, a lot of it is just gag joke based writing, so that didn't appeal to me quite

everyone understands, and answers them in english. It adds another level of humor to what's going on. Angus is definitely smarter and asks questions beyond what an infant would say. He's somewhere around a year old, and a fair amount of it is mostly about the dad and the son, but some of it is about co-parenting. Its really been the most satisfying to do. I also realized while doing *Bo Nanas* that even though I loved working with the tools I was using, it became a grind to draw. I tend to draw very slowly, so I've simplified my drawing practice. I was talking with a cartoonist friend of mine who works on a Cintiq, a small

once you get the feel for it and know that you can do it, you're okay. Although, to be completely honest, I had big backlog of strips from when I started *Daddy Daze*, but before we launched, I stopped doing strips so we could focus on getting a sales pitch together, and it took a while to get back into gear. I'm not writing as much as I'd like to, but I am back to doing a week's worth every week, which I put in a big pile by category, and then I pick from them to turn into the syndicate that week. So there can be a little bit of "will I lose the momentum I had?" That certainly can happen. Luckily by this time because I did it for

four plus years I'm not as worried about it. I feel a little more confident, because I'm writing for characters. There's a bit of surrealism in *Daddy Daze* too with the fact that Angus asks questions that are outlandish. There are little weird things that happen where there's not a lot of explanation except for confusion on the part of the dad because Angus should not be able to do that. When you're a parent, your kids will do things that you're dumbfounded by in terms of how they did something. I actually did a comic strip on this, one of those real-life things, where I stupidly gave my son a pill bottle to rattle around for two seconds while I did something, and those things have child-proof caps. He opened it so fast—he was a baby! It was poor parenting on my part, because you shouldn't have a kid look at a pill bottle and think "that's a toy." Recently, my son had found his kaleidoscope, and so I thought "okay, kaleidoscope," and I wrote it down. It became this strip where Angus is panicked and calling for his dad, the dad comes in and asks what's wrong, Angus does a bunch of "ba"s and the dad goes "Well, the first thing is you're not looking through a telescope, you're looking through a kaleidoscope," and Angus with relief goes "phew!" and the dad says "I'm almost certain the universe is not exploding." I could take an object and put in this situation of the dad and the boy, and also into their characters. Part of it is Angus seeing something and asking a question no infant would ever ask, and his dad calmly reassuring him and answering his question. So much

of what you do as a parent is answer questions. It's kind of nice being able to take this one object and write around it and think "if Angus had this, what would happen?" A cartoonist friend of mine called it "organized daydreaming." And sometimes something will lead to something else that will not even relate to the idea you had initially. It's a lot of practice, and after you get practice down, it doesn't feel quite as daunting. I've done some ghost writing for other comic strips before, and it's hard—it's a dirty little secret, sometimes cartoonists do not do their own writing; sometimes they're very open about it, sometimes comic strips have just gone on for a long time and cartoonists need some help, and sometimes you actually get credited. But it's hard to write in someone else's voice. Even writing for *MAD* magazine, stuff would get rejected. When you're doing a comic strip you are your own [boss]—my editor in chief looks at it but you're writing for your own sensibility. Hopefully you're being true to that. Writing for yourself is nice, it's harder to write for other people.

AD: *Daddy Daze* is loosely based off of your life experiences as a father. What do you feel is different about making a comic representing your own life, as opposed to one about a fictional character and their life?

JK: You know what, I still think of them as fictional characters; it's not autobiographical per se. The basic premise is, but here's how the development happened: I did this strip for myself, it was called *Dadding*

Badly at that time, and when my wife and I got separated, I was working part time teaching art and doing freelance and basically being a stay at home dad, and there was a bit of "okay, what's my next step job wise?" Well, one thing I know I can do is a comic strip, and I put together a couple of ideas, and one of them was "Can I do a fictionalized version of *Dadding Badly*?" The name got changed because it related to the fear in parenthood that you're gonna screw up, and some people didn't take it like that, they took it literally, like "is this dad not a very good dad?" When I sent it out to the syndicate, it was just about a dad and his infant son, I had kept it really simple, and there wasn't a mom character. I was mostly thinking "I don't know what I'm going to do about the mom, but let's just send it out as it is." The syndicate that owns *GoComics.com* said we have a strip that's kind of similar, so would you consider being on *GoComics*? I knew I wouldn't make a lot of money on it, so I did it once a week. It was good practice, and for a once a week strip you really don't need to do much explanation of anything. Then when I had King Features look at it again, they decided "let's go with it." When we started development, the first thing I thought about was if you're reading a strip regularly, people are going to have questions, and the first one that I brought up was "I need to figure out what the deal is with the mom." I didn't want it to be about divorce, I didn't want to have a pulpit when my former spouse did not. I was going to go with him

being a stay at home dad, the mom you don't see very much because she's working. But it's a little bit strange because even though you can do a series of comic strips that are all happening on one day, people get the feeling that they're spending time with you, and if the mom only showed up every once in awhile, it would look like she's not as involved as she should be. One cartoonist friend of mine said "just kill off the mom" [both laugh] and I said "I don't want to kill off the mom! What am I going to have them do, visit her grave site?" So I decided on working mom. Because this was real-life stuff and I still talk to my former spouse, I called her

their relationship, and ended up adding another level which made it more timely because there are some people that aren't together that raise their kids, and it's not necessarily acrimonious. So the premise became more about my life in terms of dropping off of kids, but because my kid isn't an infant anymore, it's fictionalized enough so it doesn't feel like it's autobiographical. Occasionally something from real life will slip in, but it's not completely autobiographical. Though it is weird having a basic aspect of your life being out there in public. Reading the comments that show up below the comic strip I'll see some comments about the mom and dad. The

be used as a sales tool when the syndicate goes out there... but the other thing is it's just about parenting. I have about one mom reference every week or two weeks. It's mostly just about a dad and his son. So yeah, it is a little weird having an aspect of your life out there, so even though I said it doesn't matter if it's autobiographical, it's a little strange. But the facts themselves aren't so specifically tied to my life; he's not a cartoonist. I make him a work at home dad, he has some sort of telecommuting job where he has meetings, but he mostly works on his laptop. I have no reference to my kid's mom's occupation, so the only thing is about the marital aspect.

The other thing is naming the characters not our names to separate it enough. I'm also careful not to mention either of their real names. Her drawing does look like her, but I want their lives to be private. Although my son, when we talk about the strip and I use the names



to tell her what I was going to do. She said very nicely "you know, you can use me in the strip, I trust you." That opened up an area where I could have her in the strip, and if I had it just being drop off and pick up, this could work. I don't have to refer at all to their relationship, and I don't, even though in the description that the syndicate has they say ex wife. I was able to make it not about

first time the mom showed up and people realized the mom and dad weren't together, people were like "why do we have to read this, why can't it just be funny?" It still was, but some people don't want it to be any reflection of what may be really going on. Just recently with one strip, somebody said "just go home together, be a family," and I understand that, but in the end it's a reflection, it can

of the characters in the strip or if I say the dad and the son he just goes "daddy, just say you and me." During the development period before they decided when to launch it he also said "daddy, am I a newspaper star yet?" [laughter] So even though it's not him, it's him. Oh, sorry, I forgot one aspect when I was telling you about my former spouse saying it was ok to use her. One

of the things she came up with when I was thinking about having the mom who works, she said “have you thought about changing the look of your character?” I said “no, why?” And she said “well, if it seems like it looks too much like you, sooner or later [our son]’s going to realize that it’s about him. How is he going to feel when the mom is not his mom?” And I said “aw, man, I had not thought about that. Well, he already knows it’s about him,” and that’s when she said “you can use me.” I forgot that little piece there, of “how will this affect our son?” and that is the most important thing in the end.

AD: Has interacting with fans about your comics influenced your work at all? How so?

JK: Not really, unfortunately from the first day I had a troll. If you go back to the first strip when you get to the website, you’ll see somebody there—I found out from another friend of mine that he goes to all these different cartoon sites and makes trouble. And it’s funny because the first day he checked in a number of times to make snide comics, and I’m like “really, you have nothing else going on today?” [both laugh] It was father’s day too. Most of the direct feedback is that people really liked it. I’ve gotten a couple emails from people where they said they can really feel the relationship between the dad and the son, and how gentle that is. And that means that the characters and the relationships are actually coming across, and that’s really great. I did have somebody when I was running it as *Dadding Badly* on GoComics

who would comment that he just didn’t like it, that I should go back to doing *Bo Nanas*. And there’s no answer to that. He wasn’t trolling or anything, that was his opinion, he wasn’t looking to cause trouble. But there’s not much you can say to that so I just let it go.

AD: What is your advice to people who are pursuing a career in the comics industry who want to be able to make a syndicated comic strip?

JK: I’d say unfortunately comic strips and newspapers are having trouble. It’s an industry that is hurting, so it’s very hard to make a living. They could try to figure out different ways to monetize being online. That’s just the reality of that specific niche of comics, but in a broader sense, if you want to do a comic strip—this is the greatest thing about the internet—you can. It may not end up being your profession, but you can get it out there. When I was growing up and as a young adult I didn’t have that. The best you could have was copying things on a xerox machine and you really had no way to get that to anybody, at that time there weren’t small independent comic book shows. That’s a great, spectacular way to do it, and you can do it so easily by getting a free Wordpress site and putting it up. And that will help anybody working in any sort of comics field, whether it be illustration or a comic strip or something more long-form. You become better and better, you find your own voice and find what you like to do. I’m actually surprised that I’m doing a comic strip again, because at end of *Bo Nanas* I was feel-

ing its grind, and there was a part of me that thought “maybe this is not the way I like to write, maybe I need to do longer-form stuff,” and I’ve done some longer-form stuff, mostly for myself, and I do like writing in that way as well. But I didn’t really figure that I would be back doing a comic strip. And in the end because it’s something more personal and character based, it has more import. This feels more natural to me and I’m really enjoying that and I’m enjoying working in a format that works for it. If I was doing something else or another topic or other characters or concepts it might not work in a comic strip, it might be more of a long-form thing that wouldn’t really work that well in a four-panel format.

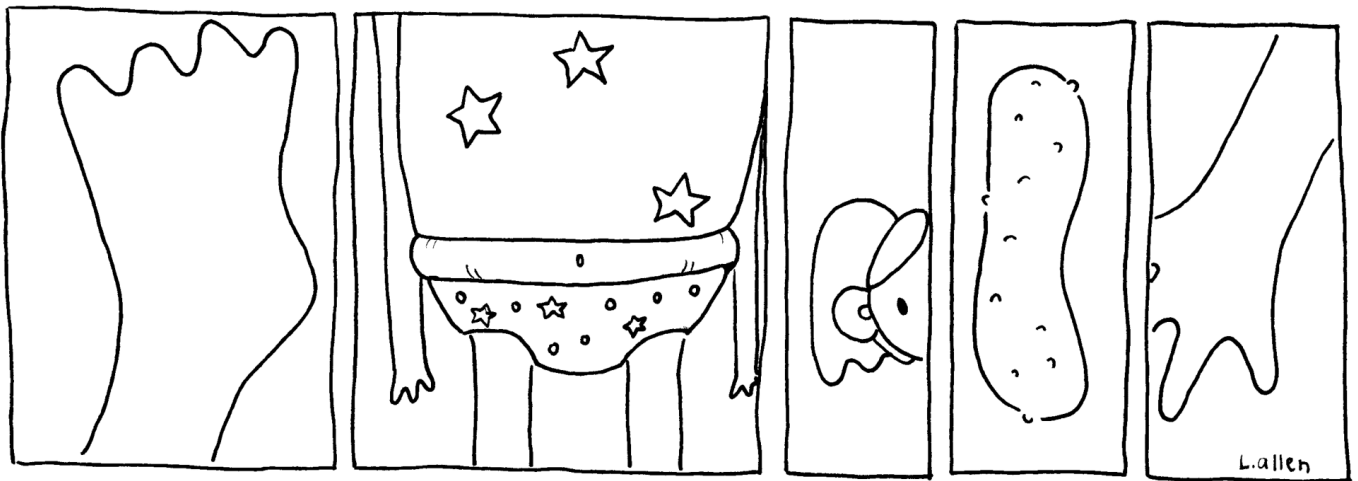
AD: Well, it’s been really great talking to you!

JK: It’s been really great talking to you too!

Deep Fried



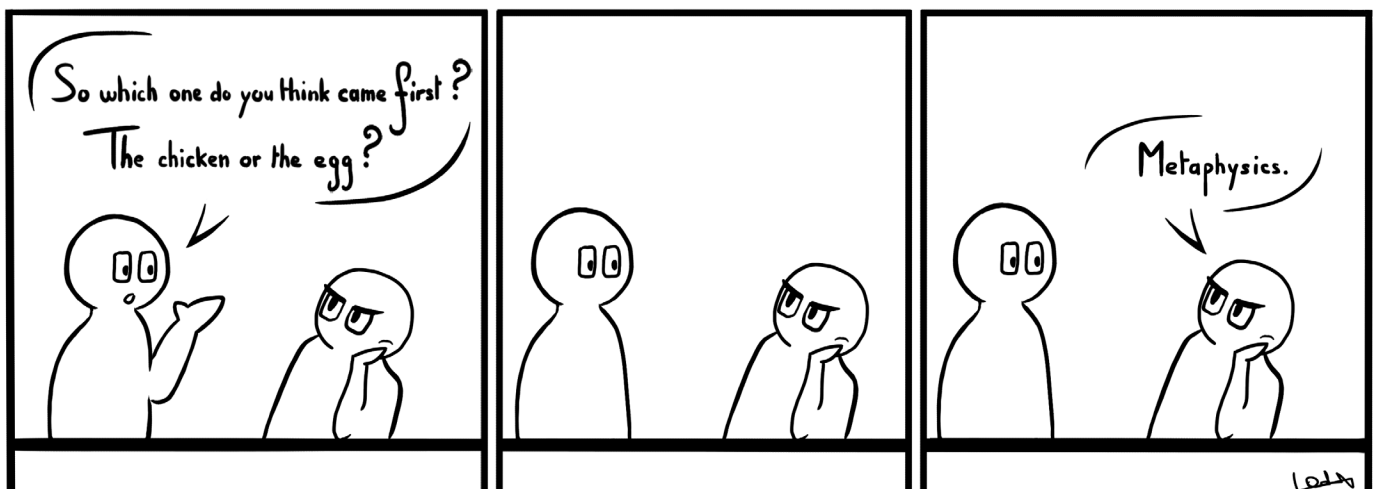
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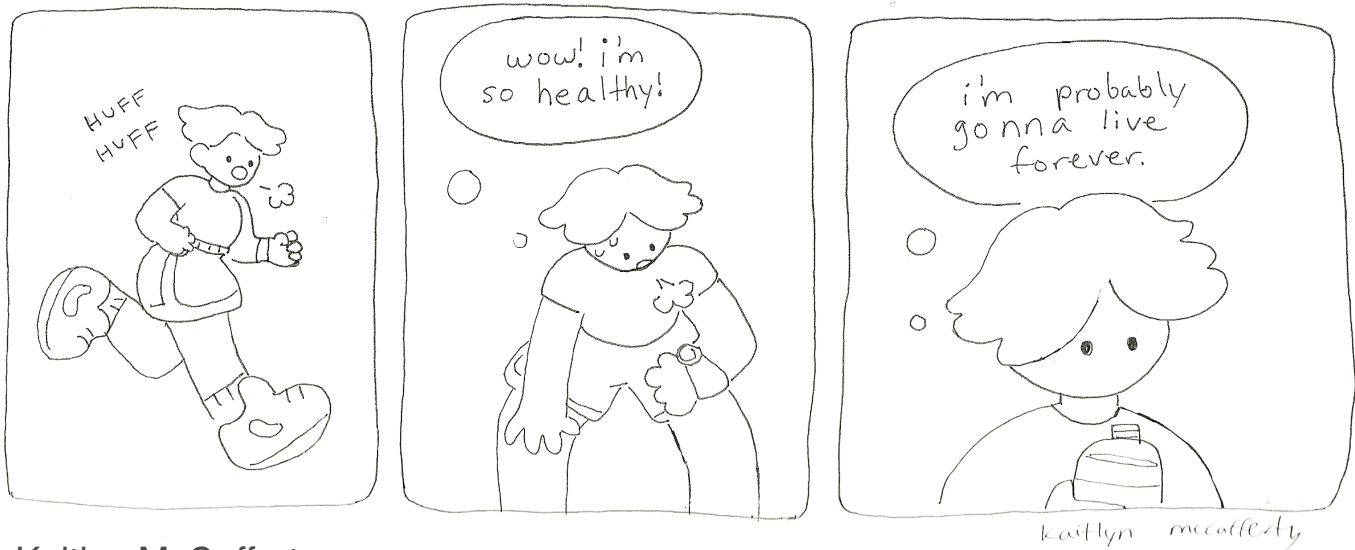
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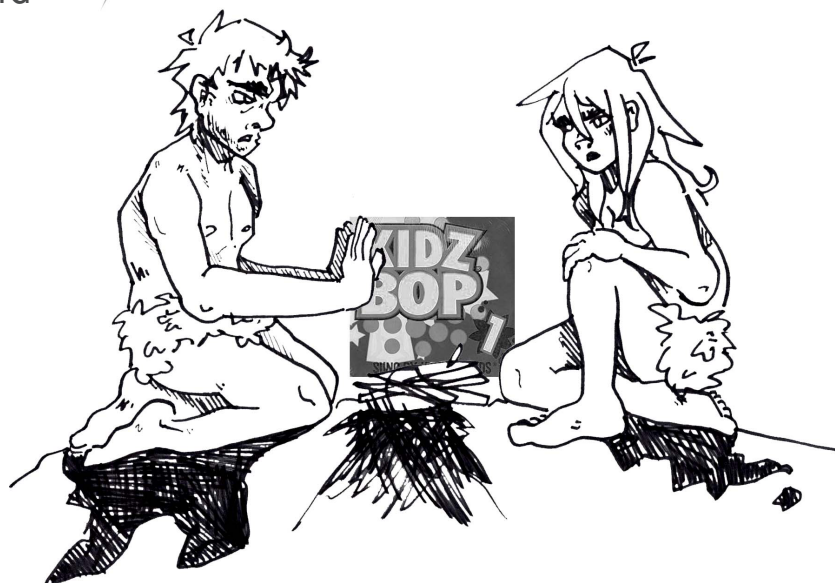
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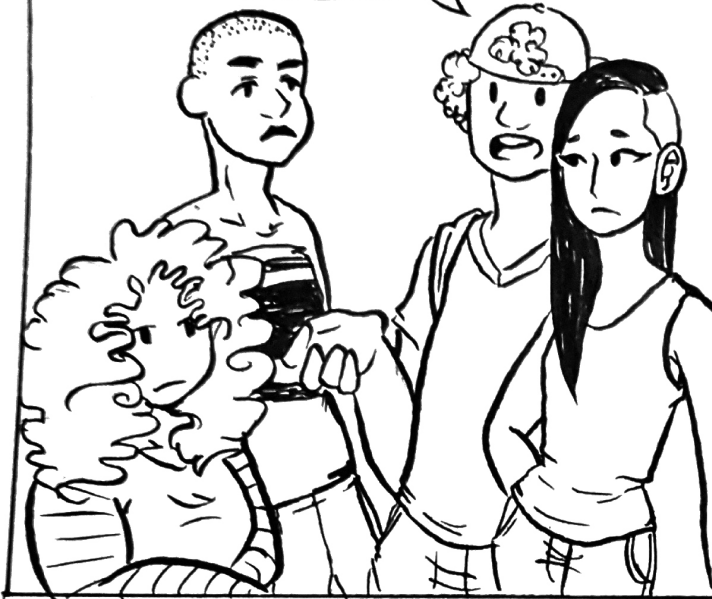
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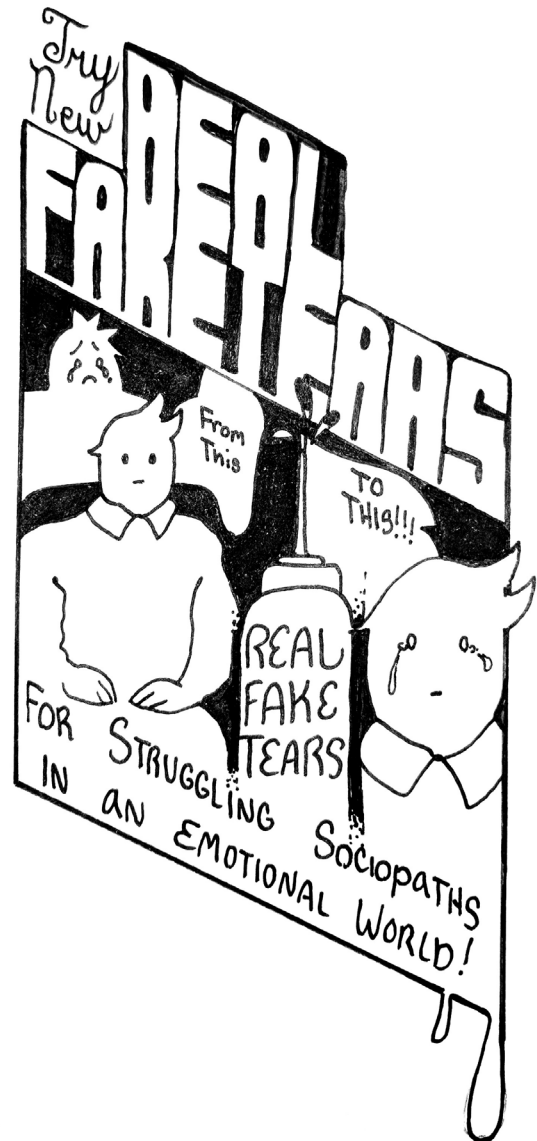
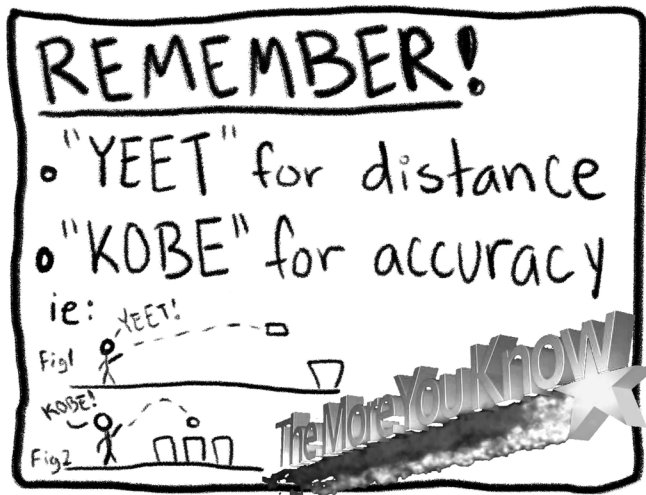


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